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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

*To be continued every* THURSDAY.

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THE report of the king of France's having lately forbid the coffee-houſes at Paris to take in any Engliſh news-papers, was no more than I expected, after having in the WORLD of laſt Thurſday was ſe'nnight, ſo plainly and openly declared my intentions of making all men politicians. But though his moſt chriſtian majeſty has thought proper to keep his ſubjects in the dark as to the ſcience of politics, yet I hear with pleaſure that his emiſſaries in this city are buying up large numbers of theſe my lucubrations, for the private peruſal of that monarch and his miniſters, and that a council is ordered to attend the reading of them as ſoon as they arrive

arrive. But for very good reaſons, I have thought proper to change my intentions, and not to meddle with matters of ſtate; at leaſt for the preſent. Indeed, to confeſs the truth, I have lately received full conviction that, great as my knowledge is in politics, there are thoſe at the head of affairs that know to the full as much as myſelf. Succeſs is not always in our power; but if we are really to enter into a war with France, I have the pleaſure of aſſuring the common people of England, that they may depend upon it's being as well conducted as if they had the entire management of it in their own hands, or even if I myſelf was to preſide at all their meetings for ſettling plans and operations.

THIS and other reaſons have enclined me for the preſent to lay aſide politics, and to go on in the old way, mending hearts inſtead of heads, or furniſhing ſuch amuſements as may fix the attention of the idle, or divert the ſchemes of the vicious for at leaſt five minutes every week. Of this kind is the following little piece, which I received ſome time ſince from a very ingenious correſpondent, who entitles it

A MEDITATION among the BOOKS.

FROM every thing in nature a wiſe man may derive matter of meditation. In meditations various authors have exerciſed their genius, or tortured their fancy. An author who meant to be ſerious, has meditated on *the myſtery of weaving:* an author who never meant to be ſerious, has meditated on a *broomſtick:* let me alſo meditate; and a *library of books* ſhall be the ſubject of my meditations.

BEFORE my eyes an almoſt innumerable multitude of authors are ranged; different in their opinions, as in their bulk and appearance; in what light ſhall I view this

this great aſſembly? Shall I conſider it as an ancient legion, drawn out in goodly array under fit commanders? or as a modern regiment of writers, where the common men have been forced by want, or ſeduced through wickedneſs into the ſervice, and where the leaders owe their advancement rather to caprice, party favour, and the partiality of friends, than to merit or ſervice?

SHALL I conſider ye, O ye books! as a herd of courtiers or ſtrumpets, who profeſs to be ſubſervient to my uſe, and yet ſeek only your own advantage? No; let me conſider this room as the great charnel-houſe of human reaſon, where darkneſs and corruption dwell; or, as a certain poet aptly expreſſes himſelf,

*Where hot and cold, and wet and dry,*
*And beef, and broth, and apple-pye*
*Moſt ſlovenly aſſemble.*

WHO are they, whoſe unadorned rayment beſpeaks their inward ſimplicity? They are *law books, ſtatutes, and commentaries on ſtatutes.* Theſe are *acts of parliament*, whom all men muſt obey, and yet few only can purchaſe. Like the SPHYNX of antiquity, they ſpeak in ænigma's, and yet devour the unhappy wretches who comprehend them not.

THESE are *commentaries on ſtatutes*; for the peruſing of them, the longeſt life of man would prove inſufficient; for the underſtanding of them, the utmoſt ingenuity of man would not avail.

CRUEL is the dilemma between the neceſſity and the impoſſibility of underſtanding; yet are we not left utterly deſtitute of relief. Behold for our comfort, *an abridgement of law and equity!* It conſiſts not of many volumes; it extends only to twenty two folio's; yet as

a few thin cakes may contain the whole nutritive ſubſtance of a ſtalled ox, ſo may this compendium contain the eſſential gravy of many a report and adjudged caſe.

THE ſages of the law recommend this abridgement to our peruſal. Let us with all thankfullneſs of heart receive their counſel. Much are we beholden to phyſicians, who only preſcribe the bark of the *Quinquina*, when they might oblige their patients to ſwallow the whole tree.

FROM theſe volumes I turn my eyes on a deep-embodied phalanx, numerous and formidable: they are *controverſial divines*: ſo has the world agreed to term them. How arbitrary is language! and how does the cuſtom of mankind join words, that reaſon has put aſunder! Thus we often hear of hell-fire cold, of deviliſh handſome, and the like; and thus *controverſial* and *divine* have been aſſociated.

THESE controverſial divines have changed the rule of life into a ſtandard of diſputation. They have employed the temple of the MOST HIGH as a fencing ſchool, where gymnaſtic exerciſes are daily exhibited, and where victory ſerves only to excite new conteſts. Slighting the bulwarks wherewith He who beſtowed religion on mankind had ſecured it, they have encompaſſed it with various minute outworks, which an army of warriors can with difficulty defend.

THE next in order to them are the redoubtable antagoniſts of common ſenſe; the gentlemen who cloſe up the common high-way to heaven, and yet open no private road for perſons having occaſion to travel that way. The writers of this tribe are various, but in principles and manner nothing diſſimilar. Let me review them as they ſtand arranged. Theſe are *Epicurean orators*,

*tors*, who have endeavoured to confound the ideas of right and wrong, to the unſpeakable comfort of highwaymen and ſtock-jobbers. Theſe are *enquirers after truth*, who never deign to implore the aid of knowledge in their reſearches. Theſe are *ſceptics*, who labour earneſtly to argue themſelves out of their own exiſtence; herein reſembling that choice ſpirit, who endeavoured ſo artfully to pick his own pocket, as not to be detected by himſelf. Laſt of all, are the compoſers of *rhapſodies*, *fragments*, and (ſtrange to ſay it) *thoughts*.

Amidst this army of anti-martyrs I diſcern a volume of peculiar appearance: it's meagre aſpect, and the dirty gaudineſs of it's habit, make it bear a perfect reſemblance to a decayed gentleman. This wretched monument of mortality was brought forth in the reign of Charles the ſecond; it was the darling and only child of a man of quality. How did it's parent exult at it's birth! How many flatterers extolled it beyond their own offſpring, and urged it's credulous father to diſplay it's excellencies to the whole world! Induced by their ſolicitations, the father arrayed his child in ſcarlet and gold, ſubmitted it to the public eye, and called it *Poems by a perſon of honour*. While he lived, his booby offspring was treated with the cold reſpect due to the rank and fortune of it's parent: but when death had locked up his kitchen, and carried off the keys of his cellar, the poor child was abandoned to the pariſh; it was kicked from ſtall to ſtall like a deſpiſed proſtitute; and after various calamities, was reſcued out of the hands of a vender of Scots-ſnuff, and ſafely placed as a penſioner in the band of free-thinkers.

Thou firſt, thou greateſt vice of the human mind, Ambition! all theſe authors were originally thy votaries! They